

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS EN ROUTE TO BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
DECEMBER 12, 1994

SECRETARY PERRY: ... NATO meeting and some of the meetings I've had leading up to the NATO meeting -- my colleagues, the other defense ministers -- both meetings and telephone calls.

I start off with the view that UNPROFOR for all of its problems has performed a very valuable function the last couple of years, delivering humanitarian aid and limiting the intensity of violence or in helping limit the spread of violence. It saved, I think, tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of lives. And so in the talk of UNPROFOR leaving that's come up in the last few weeks, I and my counterpart defense ministers have been looking at how those functions would be performed in the absence of UNPROFOR and have not come up with any very good answers.

As a consequence, in our discussions with the British and the French defense ministers, the three of us at least believe that it is important to try to find a way of preserving UNPROFOR. So we've directed our efforts to finding ways of making UNPROFOR more effective. That's the key to being able to preserve it.

I've discussed a number of approaches with them on the phone and then in person with Minister Leotard this morning. I'll be talking further with Rikkind tomorrow, with the group of NATO defense ministers that participate in UNPROFOR Wednesday morning, and then at the plenary session Wednesday afternoon. I'll focus on what can we do to make UNPROFOR more effective to try to save it.

Leotard had some very interesting ideas this morning which I believe we'll be able to support. In short, I think that this is a cause worth pursuing and one which I intend to pursue along with my NATO counterparts the next couple of days and on into the future. One of the specific things the United States would have to do to preserve UNPROFOR is prevent a unilateral lift of the embargo because one thing that is absolutely certain is that if we lift the embargo unilaterally then most of the nations supporting UNPROFOR will leave. They'll leave on the announcement of it, not waiting for it to happen. I will assure my counterpart defense ministers that this administration will fight any move to unilaterally lift the embargo.

At the same time while we're at the defense ministers meeting, we'll make contingency plans -- what if? What if in spite of our best efforts, UNPROFOR leaves? In that case, we have committed in principle -- the United States has committed in principle -- to support that withdrawal. At our NATO meeting on Wednesday, the military committee will present to us their planning on how to do that. The defense ministers will get this plan and critique it. I can tell you more about that after we actually get detailed

discussion on it. But I have already said, and I'll repeat now, that the guidance to the military committee on doing their planning was that it should be a vigorous venture. We should not contemplate going in with a token force. If we go in there, we're going to go in with a strong military force.

Besides those discussions in NATO, there will be talks on the consequences of the decisions made at the foreign ministers meeting earlier this month on NATO expansion. My discussions will focus on two points. First of all, the talk about there being an acceleration on NATO expansion is a misinterpretation of what the ministers agreed. We're not accelerating NATO expansion. There is no schedule to accelerate at this point. What will be happening next year is simply an examination of the "how" and the "why" of expansion. There will be no candidate members selected. There'll be no offers made. We're years away from having an expansion of NATO.

In the meantime, we will want to focus our efforts as defense ministers on what to do to make Partnership for Peace much more effective, much more vital than it is now. That means taking serious moves, not only for the planning of the joint exercises and the joint training but creating institutional processes for funding them and for organizing them. All of that will be proper discussions for the defense ministers to make Partnership for Peace, which is the real thing we have going, a vital, effective operation. To the extent that it's vital and effective, it serves a useful purpose in and of itself, but it also is the most effective path toward the eventual expansion of NATO.

When we leave Brussels then on Thursday and head for Moscow, I'm going there for the Gore/Chernomyrdin Commission meeting, but I hope to also have discussions at the Ministry of Defense where I'll review with them the discussions at the defense ministers meeting relative to Bosnia and also relative to Partnership for Peace and expansion because I think they have some misconceptions on both of those points.

At this point I'm not sure if we'll be able to meet with Minister Grachev. He's off in Chechnya right now. He may still be there by this Friday. I don't know and I don't think he knows at this point where he's going to be on Friday.

That's all I wanted to say in the way of introductory remarks. I can take three or four questions and then we can all hit the sack.

Q. Mr. Secretary, you talk about making the UNPROFOR forces more effective. One assumes by that that you mean that you want the forces set so that -- they normally have sand kicked in their faces so that they can operate -- so that they can respond when the Serbs -- two drunk Serbs stop them at a roadblock somewhere and say you can't go any further. What are you talking about making them more effective? Making them stronger? Making them respond more violently? What?

SECRETARY PERRY: Let me be clear first of all what we're not talking about. We're not talking about converting UNPROFOR into a combatant force to fight a war. I'm

talking about making them more effective to the mandate they already have which is delivery of humanitarian aid and for limiting the levels of violence. And even in that mandate, their effectiveness has been severely hampered in the last number of weeks in particular

Minister Leotard had a very interesting proposal which we discussed this morning which I think is worthy of some serious consideration, pointed precisely at the delivery of humanitarian aid. He's talking about establishing what we called in earlier discussions a "blue route" which would have a convoy route from Split to Sarajevo and to other cities in central Bosnia. That was considered well over a year ago. At that time, the Croats and the Muslims were fighting each other. Now that the Croats and Muslims have a federation in Bosnia, you can now chart out a route in which that becomes a practical consideration. So that's worth reconsidering at this time. When Minister Leotard proposed that, he got good support among the Americans who received the proposal and I will carry forward his proposal. He's also proposed it separately to Rifkind. We will be discussing that then. It's basically a French proposal but the US will be supporting that proposal in the discussions at NATO.

We also wanted to explore the notion of various ways of which the Sarajevo airport could be made secure. Those of you who have followed that problem know, first of all, it is not at all secure. It's at the whim of the Serbs any time they want to shut it down. Secondly, if you look closely at the map, you see it's not easy to make it secure. That's something we will explore. I'm not as optimistic on that point.

The third area of exploration will be on ways of consolidating and restructuring the UNPROFOR forces so that they themselves are not so vulnerable to be taken hostage. That will involve looking at ways of redeploying those forces. I want to emphasize these are decisions for UNPROFOR to take, not for the US. And not for NATO as an organization, but many of the members -- many of the NATO defense ministers who are there are also the key countries in the UNPROFOR force.

Q Can I just ask two related followups? One, you made a reference to restructuring and repositioning the forces. Leotard said he didn't expect any additional troops to be contributed by Western European countries. So that would suggest that to improve the security in one area, you might have to take forces from another area.

SECRETARY PERRY: Yes.

Q One question I have is, from where would these forces come and does this mean that some of the so-called safe areas might need to be abandoned? And the second and last question I have is there is a little bit of a deja vu quality about all of this. It was only two months ago that you were in Seville and NATO was talking about taking more robust action and none of that even happened because of the British and French representatives in the UN system didn't want it to happen. The British and French in NATO wanted it to

happen, but the British and French in the UN did not and it got frustrated. Why would we be any more successful this time around?

SECRETARY PERRY: What's really *deja vu* about all this is that we go back today as we went back a few months ago to consider what the alternatives are and all of the courses of action seem to require keeping UNPROFOR in country. So what we were trying to do in Seville was to find a way of making it more effective. That's still what we're trying to do. It is clear from the Bihac experience that simply invoking NATO airpower is not in and of itself sufficient. We have to pay substantial attention to the UNPROFOR ground forces as well. That requires the British, French, the Dutch and Canadians wearing both their NATO hat and their UNPROFOR hat to look seriously at this question.

I see this as a difficult problem, but it's not a problem that I'm prepared to give up on without continuing not only to present ideas, but to force people to consider the alternatives of that. None of these ideas is a very attractive idea, or easy to implement. It's just that the alternatives are so unattractive. The alternative of UNPROFOR pulling out of there -- anybody who has thought that through, all of the consequences of thinking that through, find that to be an enormously unattractive alternative.

Q What about the first question? About repositioning the forces? Where are you going to get the troops from? Does this mean certain safe areas might need to be relinquished in order to get the forces to provide more security in other areas?

SECRETARY PERRY: I would not propose to relinquish a safe area. But the UNPROFOR forces are deployed even in central Bosnia in a rather diffused way. They're deployed outside of Sarajevo, for example, at these weapons marshaling areas in all of these little clusters of forces of 15 or 20 -- units that are almost by definition exceedingly vulnerable. So we may have to give up some smaller missions at least. Even before you'd even contemplate problems at the safe area. I continue to believe that the seclusion of the safe areas is through the establishment of exclusion zones. As you know, that's what I proposed at Bihac. It was not accepted at Bihac. I'm still not giving up on that as an idea worth pursuing in the other safe areas.

Q Are you going to propose that in these safe areas at this meeting?

SECRETARY PERRY: We already have -- when the exclusion zone was established at Gorazde, already established there was that exclusion zones could be established at the other ones if they came under attack. So I don't see any need to preempt at this point. It's a matter of waiting to see if there's a move made against one of those safe areas. That is a point to then invoke the exclusion zone mandate. At that time, we'll have to see whether the UNPROFOR is willing to call for the airstrikes. I continue to have the view that in balancing the risks of invoking NATO airpower versus the return benefits, that I still come out believing that the return benefits outweigh the risks involved. I do not

minimize the risks or ignore them, I just say that I think that in balance, a strong show of power is more effective than not having any military power to demonstrate

Q. Is there being any consideration given to beefing up the rules of engagement to allow the UNPROFOR forces to react a little bit more vehemently if they are blocked or stopped?

SECRETARY PERRY: I would certainly recommend that, but I would want to be clear that I think that I believe the mandate that UN forces have is already sufficiently strong to do what needs to be done. It is a matter of rules of engagement, not a mandate of what the UNPROFOR commander will instruct his forces to do.

Q. Can we return for a moment back to the contingency plan if there's a withdrawal? To what extent do you envision the NATO troops would have to evacuate civilians? Would it be limited to relief or humanitarian workers or would they have to protect Bosnian citizens as part of that withdrawal?

SECRETARY PERRY: I don't know the answer to that. That's certainly something that we have considered. And I know that's something the NATO planners are considering. I do not know what their proposal is going to be on that. They have focused on the extraction of the UNPROFOR forces, but if you imagine now the UNPROFOR forces are coming out of the safe areas, you have to also consider what you would do with civilians in that area. I do not have an answer to that question. That's one of the very big issues that would have to be decided.

Q. I'm sort of hung up on the reluctance of UNPROFOR to use what is already there. Do you feel by getting British and French and the Canadians on board that that will change UNPROFOR's apparent systemic reluctance to use force in these situations? And why would the Serbs not respond by grabbing them the moment you step up your use of force because you would threaten more use of force? I'm sort of missing the logic that you're employing here to break the cycle which has now been set up -- the cycle of the Serbs continually taking little bits more, giving a little bit more ground and every time you try to exercise force, UNPROFOR backs down and the Serbs take more. Why do you think you're going to convince UNPROFOR to do anything?

SECRETARY PERRY: The only reason that UNPROFOR would make a different decision next month than they made last month is because they have thought through the alternatives and as I said, they look very unattractive. Therefore, the alternative of taking a stronger line and of restructuring their forces will be and is being reconsidered. Now the first part of your question, is that a necessary, not a sufficient, but a necessary condition for that happening is that the British and the French and the Dutch and the Canadian nations and their defense ministers have to decide that that alternative is a better alternative to pursue than seeing the UNPROFOR forces come out.

2546

Q What about the SAM sites that we've been unable to deal with at this point? Is part of the making UNPROFOR more effective dealing with some of those missiles that have been threatening NATO planes?

SECRETARY PERRY: If an important part of this plan is going to be a robust use of NATO airpower, then a part of that operational plan will include neutralizing air defense systems on the ground for reasons that are obvious.

Thank you, Sir.

Q. Inaudible

SECRETARY PERRY: What focused their attention was our saying that we would assist in the withdrawal. All of a sudden that made it seem real and now they start thinking about the withdrawal and going through the step by step and what it means is very unattractive.

END